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RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION PRIORITY
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1157
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001070

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS, ISN/ECC D FORBES

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [PREF](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: AMBASSADOR REVIEWS PROBLEMS IN EASTERN
SRI LANKA AND HUMAN RIGHTS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER

REF: A. COLOMBO 1062

[1](#)B. COLOMBO 1054

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ROBERT O. BLAKE, JR. REASONS: 1.4(b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: In a meeting on November 25, Ambassador discussed current U.S. concerns about the situation in Sri Lanka with Foreign Minister Bogollagama. After praising GSL cooperation with the UN and ICRC over delivering food supplies to the population of the Vanni, Ambassador noted that increasing violence in the East was undermining U.S. efforts to assist with stabilizing the volatile region. He also covered human rights problems in Vavuniya, the case of detained journalist J.S. Tissainayagam and the stalled progress on releasing child soldiers. Ambassador urged the government to strengthen domestic legislation on non-proliferation and export controls. End Summary.

Humanitarian Issues in North

[1](#)2. (C) At the Minister's request, Ambassador began by reviewing with Bogollagama the Sri Lankan military's progress against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the northern battlefields. He noted the GSL's cooperation with the UN and ICRC in assuring humanitarian food convoys reached the civilian population in the Tiger-held Vanni but highlighted that shelter, fresh water and sanitation all needed more attention. Ambassador recounted Defense Secretary Gothabaya Rajapaksa's commitment during a recent meeting (ref A) to have the Ministry of Defense take a fresh look at the restrictions placed on shelter materials moving into the Vanni, and urged the GSL to show flexibility.

Security/Human Rights Problems in East

[1](#)3. (C) Ambassador then turned to the East and registered concern over the extent to which insecurity and human rights violations are undermining our and other donors' attempts to help encourage new job-creating investments in the region. Ambassador noted in particular USAID's projects to attract private sector investment in the region. He told Bogollagama

that without an improvement in the security and human rights situation, we were worried those efforts could stall. He also recounted conversations with both the Defense Secretary and Eastern Province Chief Minister Sivanesanathurai Chandrakanthan ("Pillaiyan") in which he urged both to regularize and demobilize the TMVP by incorporating some of the cadres into the security forces, while providing vocational training and education to the rest.

Conditions in Vavuniya Deter IDPs from Re-Locating

¶4. (C) Ambassador observed that the recent movement of some conflict-displaced persons out of Tiger-held territory was encouraging, but stressed that poor conditions in the IDP camps in the Mannar area were a disincentive for people to move south to government-controlled territory. More important, the deteriorating human rights climate in Vavuniya, with increasing abductions associated with several paramilitary units, raised fears among many displaced persons about their personal security if they moved to government-held areas.

Child Soldiers

¶5. (C) DASD Clad's recent visit provided another opportunity to press the government for movement on child soldiers. Ambassador related to Bogollagama that the Defense Secretary had promised to become more personally involved in the issue.

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Ambassador stressed that our assistance on maritime and aerial surveillance, which has helped GSL interdict LTTE smuggling operations, remains frozen until we see further progress on releasing child soldiers serving with government-allied paramilitaries. The FM thanked the U.S. for the assistance we had provided in the past and acknowledged it had been helpful.

Jailed Journalist

¶6. (C) Ambassador emphasized to Bogollagama that the case of detained journalist J.S. Tissainayagam was receiving wide attention in Washington. He noted that it is always a topic of discussion when we speak with congressional staff and members about assistance to Sri Lanka. The FM understood the high-profile nature of the case and held open the possibility that the new acting Attorney General might grant bail. (Note: Tissainayagam's wife reported that his lawyers had already requested bail on June 30 and were told, in court, that then-Attorney General De Silva had denied their petition. Tissainayagam's legal team remain skeptical that bail will be granted, but are currently focused on the hearing scheduled for December 5, when the judge has said she will rule on the admissibility in evidence of his confession.)

¶7. (C) Following up on earlier discussions with Defense Secretary Rajapaksa, Ambassador provided a letter to the Minister urging the GSL to amend its export control legislation to cover chemical and biological weapons and related technologies, as well as trade in missile, nuclear, and dual-use items. Ambassador, noting GSL's good non-proliferation track record, relayed the U.S. offer of help in updating the export control regime. Bogollagama promised to look into the matter and respond.

¶8. (C) COMMENT: Bogollagama raised just one concern, that of Sri Lankan workers reportedly being barred from employment by U.S. defense contractors (Ref A). Bogollagama otherwise acknowledged Ambassador's points and did not push back on any of the issues raised. Bogollagama's high expenditures for his frequent travels out of the country (often with family members) have subjected him to criticism by both the pro-government and opposition press. Few consider him a

close confidant of the President or the President's all-powerful brothers. He appears to use these open-ended meetings to probe us for information about our interactions with different elements of the government.

Blake